



COMMISSION ON  
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND  
THE ASPEN INSTITUTE  
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## Teacher and Principal Recommendations: Effective Teachers for All Students, Effective Principals for All Communities

***Effective teachers make a difference in the classroom.*** One of the foundational principles of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is the idea that teacher quality is the single most important school factor in student success. Studies have shown that good teachers can improve student achievement by as much as a grade level more than less effective teachers over the course of a year. For low-performing students, the differences are more dramatic. In Tennessee, for example, studies have found that low-achieving students gain an average of 14 percentile points with the least effective teachers. By contrast, the most effective teachers produce average gains of 53 percentile points with low-achieving students (Sanders and Rivers 1996).

***Effective principals also play a vital role in raising student achievement.*** Research increasingly shows that the quality of school leadership is crucial to student and school performance. One study found that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors contributing to what students learn at school (Leithwood et al. 2004). A review of research on school leadership further found that an increase in principal leadership ability was associated with higher student achievement (Waters, Marzano and McNulty 2003).

***But students who need it most are often taught by less experienced, less qualified teachers.*** Teacher quality is unevenly distributed in schools, and the students with the greatest needs tend to have access to the least qualified, least effective teachers. A study on the distribution of teachers in three states found that children in high-poverty schools are much more likely than their more advantaged peers to be assigned to novice teachers, teachers who lack subject matter knowledge and teachers with lower academic skills (Peske and Haycock 2006).

***We need to ensure that ALL students are taught by highly qualified, effective teachers.*** It is time to recognize teachers who are *effective* at ensuring children are achieving in the classroom, rather than simply those who possess *qualification* for entering it. Therefore, we recommend requiring all teachers to be Highly Qualified Effective Teachers (HQET)—teachers who demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom.

- Teachers would need to produce learning gains and receive positive principal or teacher peer review evaluations.
- Teachers who need it most would also, for the first time, be guaranteed high-quality professional development.
- And to further ensure quality for all, we must ensure school districts treat all schools and their children in ensuring we have effective teachers in all classrooms and must require districts with high turnover rates to develop recruitment and retention plans.

***And we must ensure that all schools are led by effective principals.*** Focusing on principal quality is an important first step in defining and promoting effective school leadership. Therefore, we recommend enhancing school leadership by establishing a definition of a Highly Effective Principal (HEP).

- This HEP definition would require principals to obtain certification or licensure as required in their state, demonstrate the necessary skills for effectively leading a school and, most importantly, produce improvements in student achievement.
- All principals should meet this new definition, but we recommend requiring it as a condition of working at a Title I school.